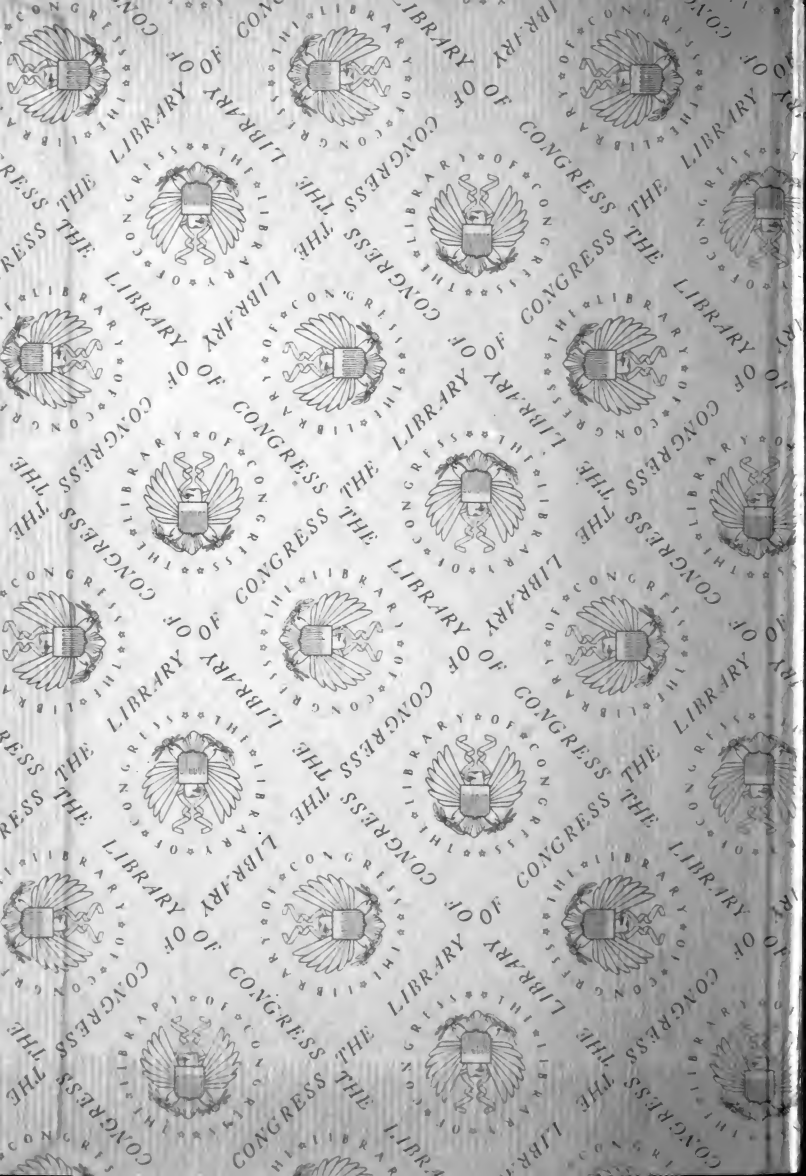


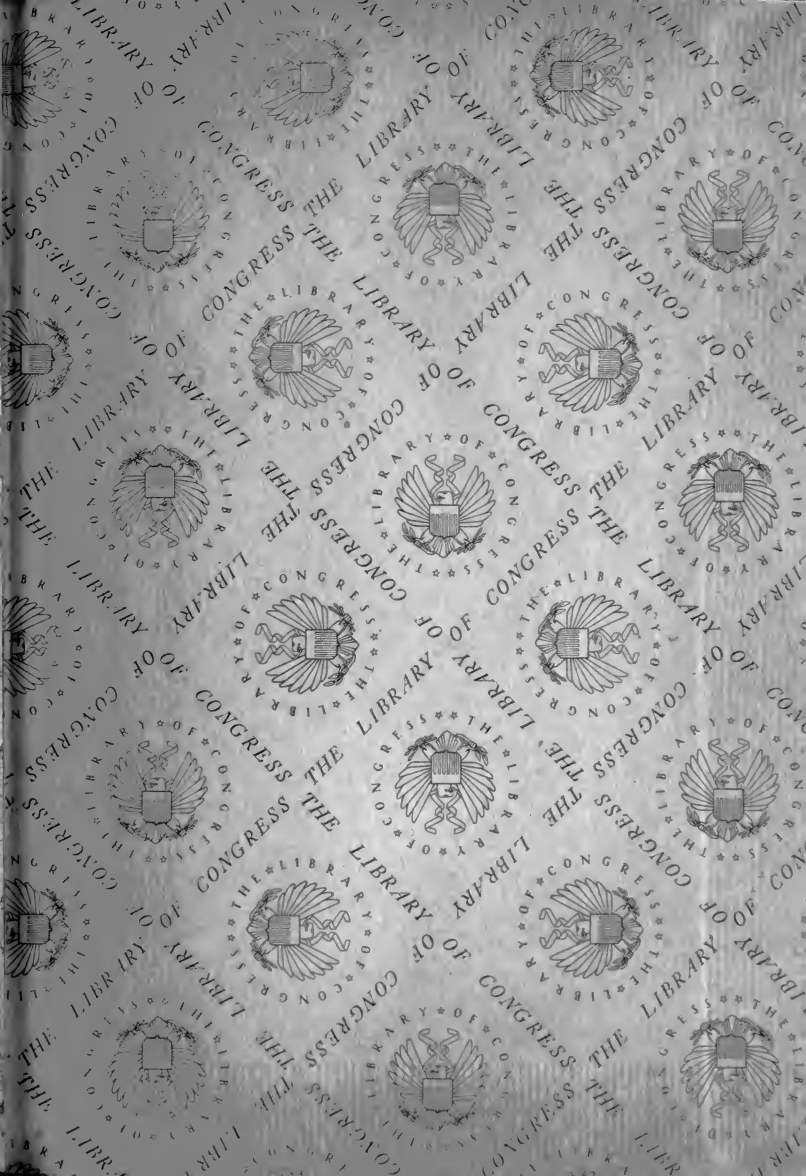
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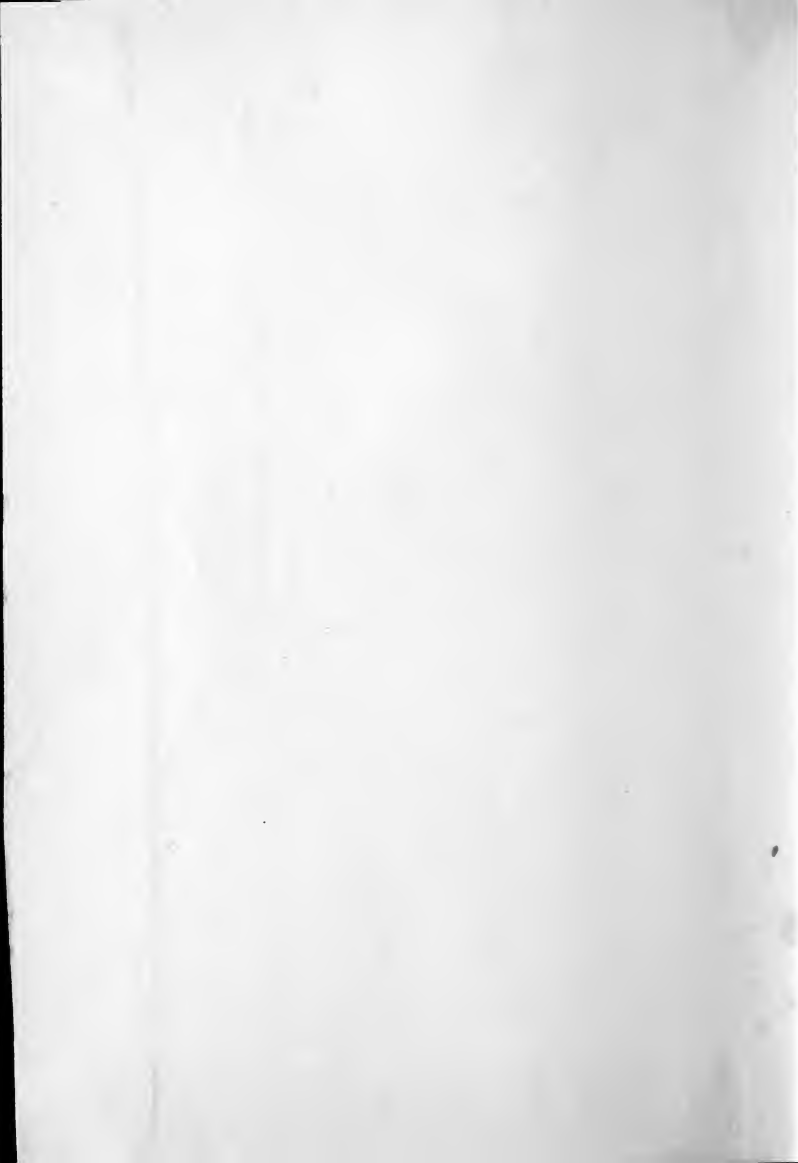
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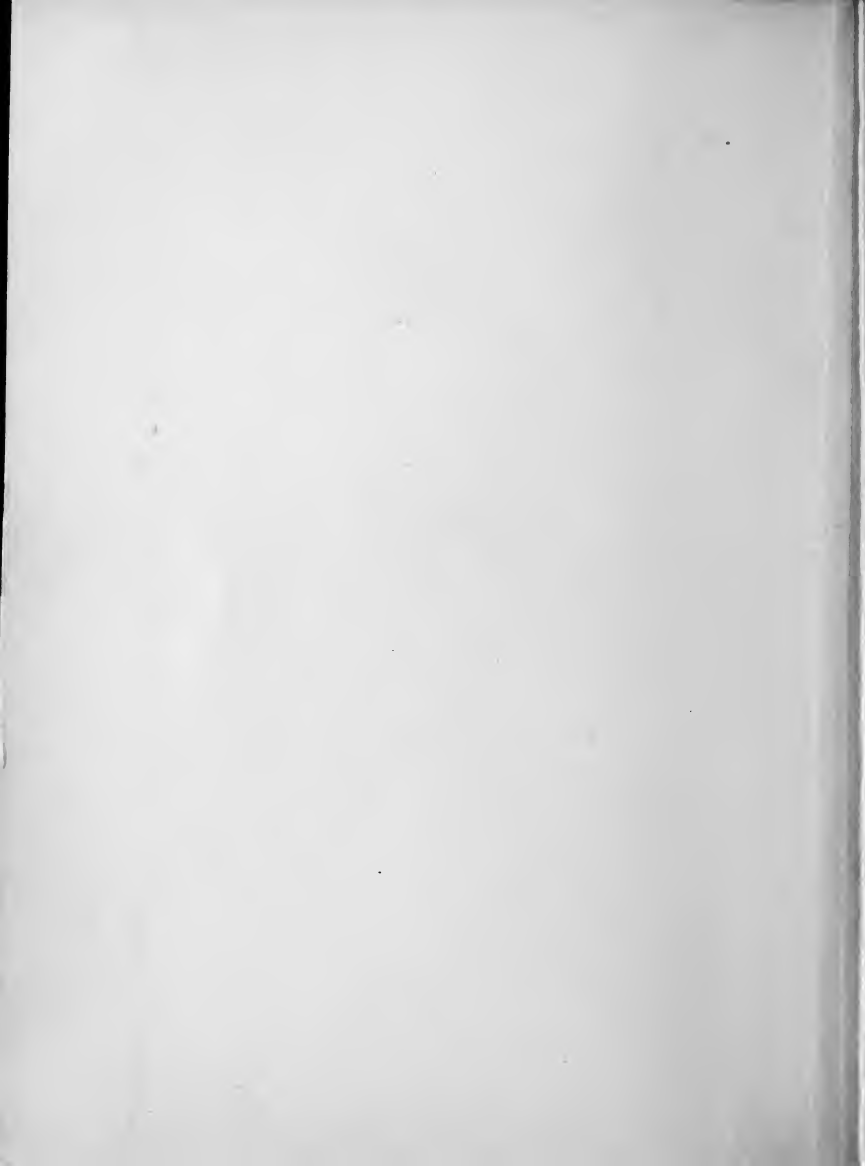
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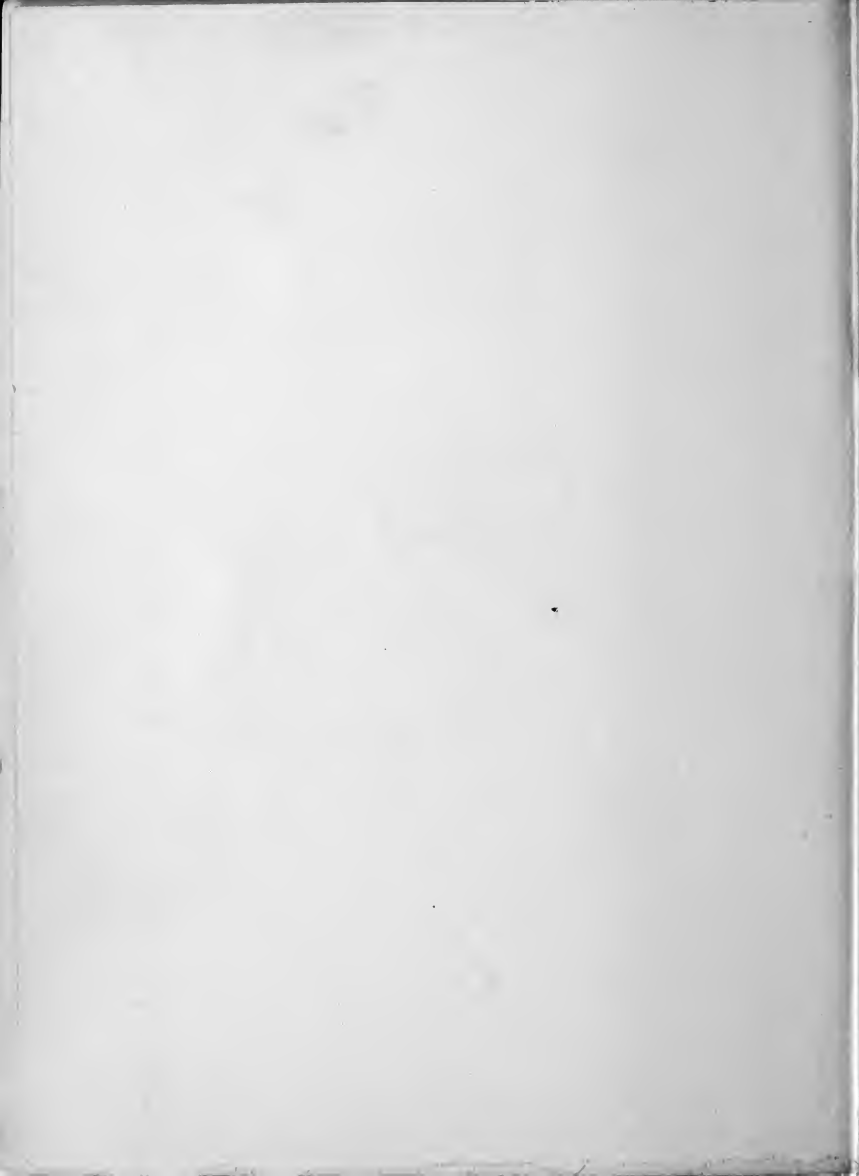








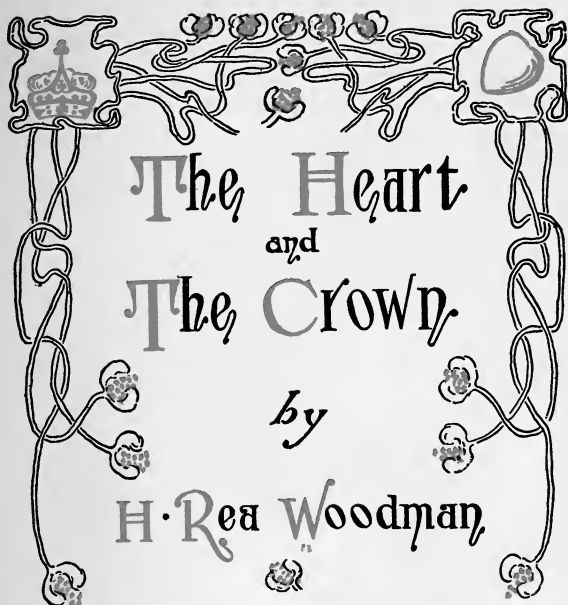












The Heart  
and  
The Crown

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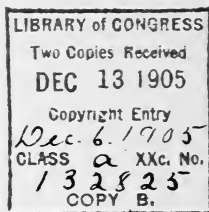
H. Rea Woodman

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1905





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Leaves of a book

To the highest in my life — my  
keenest joy, my greatest grief.




# The King's Heart







 S Hester Prynne, in her prison cell,  
Embroidered the scarlet with lines of gold,—  
Beautiful, intricate stitches which told  
Of a passion's depth words could not tell,  
Because she loved love too wholly well,—  
So I 'broider my pain, stitch it about  
With fair, useless lines, in and out, in and out,  
Dreaming, as I work, how our love befell.  
And every delicate stitch, Dear Heart,  
Tender, exquisite, wrought fast and true,  
Is making a marvel of what was mere woe,  
A barren, desolate thing apart.  
And I know now why, the wan days through,  
That sweet woman 'broidered the scarlet so.

**W**HAT, do you ask, would my heart bring to you?  
Not purple—that 's fit for a king's low pride,  
And can be torn, stained, cast aside;  
For the king's wide ermine is edged with rue  
And heavy with heartache through and through:  
Not gold—it is the one fair thing  
That lovers can not to lovers bring,  
Except in the heart of the pansy's blue.  
I could not bring to my love's clean hand  
What the world daily soils in careless ease,  
Though it were born, virgin-pure, of the sod;  
Gifts fit for men—power, fame, gain, land—  
I shake my soul quite, quite free from these;  
I would bring love to you—that 's fit for God!

### III

“YOU are unjust to me,” you wrote yesterday.  
 Wherever I look I can see the words,  
 Can hear them above the bees and the birds;  
 The pulse has gone out of the throbbing May,  
 For I am unjust — unjust to you, you say.  
 It seems the last thing that could be true,  
 That I — I could be unjust to you.  
 I can think of heaven’s blue being gray —  
 Of a world without blue — the blue of your eyes!  
 I can think of the stars weary of shining  
 In the far, still, dim, vast void above;  
 Of the mother-God turning from the cries  
 Of our impotent shrinkings and pining . . .  
 But I — unjust to you — unjust, oh, my Love!

**S**OMEWHERE or other I read to-day  
A poet's query: Where would you spend  
Your very last hour if all life should end  
With horrent shriek, with blare, blaze and bray —  
When things go to bits like a child's mad play?  
Supposing that you knew, the poet said,  
The hour after the worlds would be dead?  
I said to my soul, "Where would you spend it — say?"  
That hour . . . when all life bursts at the core;  
World shouting with dying curse to world,  
The heavens bellowing hollow alarms,  
The seas, affronted, answering roar for roar,  
With wave and monster and ship uphurled —  
My soul said, "I would spend that hour in his arms!"

✓  
J CAN not think that you meant it, dear,  
And indeed and indeed I did not mind  
At the time—I but thought you color-blind!  
But to-day there came a fleck of fear,  
Just a fleck, like the first spot of sear  
When no one dreams autumn. I tell you quick  
Before the spot makes the bright leaf sick,  
And autumn's drear fall on moor and mere.  
You know that day we saw in the shop  
The picture of the girl with gold hair,  
And you said you liked yellow hair the best?  
Well, my hair is n't gold, and you must stop  
Whatever you 're doing and speak me fair  
And tell me you don't and kiss back my rest!

✓

## VI

**S**OMEWHERE to-night, in the city's din,  
Cries, prayers, moans, curses, roar upon roar,  
Hoarse, shrill, tense, bitter, the city before  
And about you, its humanity thin  
And grotesque in its common-place sin —  
Superb, sometimes, in its reaches for right,  
But hoping, alike, in weakness and might,  
Some far, long-wished joy to enter in,  
You hear my voice, you see my eyes,  
As if you mused, deep, on the star-lit sea,  
Keeping solemn tryst on that crowded mart.  
The splendid clamor and glitter dies —  
All your being is calling out for me —  
O Heart, I come, I come — O trysting heart!

## VII

YOU will be here next Wednesday, you write;  
 For an instant the words pulsed red  
 On the page. "I shall see him!" I said.  
 Then the thought, "It's a week!" and the white  
 Gleamed blank on my awakened sight.  
 Seven whole days, for there is no hope  
 The god's will shorten that age's scope,  
 For when did the gods care for lovers' plight?  
 The day after the day after to-morrow  
 I can say, "In four days I shall see him!"  
 And the day after the day after that  
 I can say, "Love, to-morrow!" nor sorrow  
 For the tedious week, lost and dim  
 In the blinding joy of the day after that!

## VIII

FOR the number of heart-leaps called "a week,"—  
I borrow the phrase from the stupid world,  
Who, with his imagination furled  
Close and tight, does not dream to seek  
A language wherein lovers may speak,—  
For "a week" your picture has been in my room,  
Its sufficient presence, its music and bloom;  
The dear shadow-shapes and fancies that peek  
About, in and out, now many, now one,  
Have stilled to quiet; I have brought no flowers,  
I have not lured the silver moonlight  
Nor called the poets. I have not done  
Anything to ornament the hours  
Since your picture came, just "a week" to-night.



# IX

**H**AKESPEARE says,—now pardon me, Sweet,  
 As if there were aught he does not say  
 In his packed, incisive, all-human way,  
 His blood keeping time to the myriad beat  
 Of all hearts, to the tramp of all feet! —  
 He says that love is not love that alters  
 When it alteration finds, nor falters  
 Though tempests of hate about it meet.  
 Your love has altered since the night words came,  
 “I love you utterly!” Mine has changed, too;  
 Your love for me has grown deeper and faster,—  
 Is not that change? — and mine, from a tame  
 Still-eyed thing to this passion my life breaks through.  
 Manifestly, he is wrong, the dear Master.

**I**F no convention stood, if no bar stayed  
Our lives from mingling together ;  
If for us there were fair weather,  
June joy, and the boughs and the grasses swayed  
To make us music ; if we were not bayed  
On every hand by man's stolid frown  
Beating our noblest impulses down ;  
If, for us, some great, gracious god had made  
A broad, straight road we could walk in free,  
And wear our crowns, and not sheathe our eyes,  
Bear each the other's daily needs, nor miss  
The simple, homely service we see  
Other lovers giving, nor knowing the prize —  
Why, dear, I think we would die of that bliss.

# XI

OF her, believe me, no jealous thoughts throng.  
 You need not tell her of the gift I send;  
 Let the knowledge of that begin and end  
 In our hearts' stillest places. If any wrong  
 Has accrued to her from my pain, low and long;  
 If my finding you the man among men  
 Made for me in the beginning, when  
 God was planning his world sure and strong—  
 At least I have not urged my claim,  
 Nor mentioned God's desire in the matter.  
 I can look in her eyes with as clean a pride  
 As the right that shields her your name,  
 As white as rose petals that scatter!  
 Only, see what she has—and God on my side.

AND He really is on my side, that God  
Men talk of so loudly and learnedly  
And ignore so unconcernedly ;  
He is on my side, not because His rod  
Has scourged me deep, nor because His sod  
Must yield a grave for this love of ours,  
Entomb the bright joy, enurn the hours  
That, though all denied, led no less to God.  
He only stands in our thought, you know,  
For the everlasting on-going of things ;  
He has no rod, no throne, no reach  
Over the dim worlds' vast come and go ;  
He is our hope given purple and wings —  
I only mean nature made us each for each.

### XIII

**I**T is to-day and now I say "To-morrow!"  
The week has dragged its long length through,  
Interminable in the May's blue,  
And now I am trying to steal or borrow  
Patience from somewhere—somebody's sorrow  
Must yield me its fruit. I must live, you see,  
Till to-morrow finally reaches me.  
What a strait—to have to steal or borrow!  
But if I live on the power I own,—  
Sound and firm as far as it goes,—  
It will be exhausted when my call  
Is loudest, when my tense need makes moan.  
Joy eats up strength—I know its throes;  
How for to-morrow, if patience has used all?

# XIV

YOU shall not slur my sacrifice  
 Nor call it less than great. Because desire  
 Has broken bounds, a devastating fire  
 To burn love black,—leave blanched bones to rise  
 From the scorched plains to kill our eyes  
 When we face all the years that have been,—  
 Would you have, then, this love bitter and thin,  
 Shrinking—crouching—behind disgust and lies?  
 To that I offer up love's crowning joy;  
 You and I are too deeply bred  
 Of the moral stuff of the race . . . to see  
 Our love sicken to death with that alloy . . .  
 To see— Forgive me, my anger is sped  
 And my thick tears take your part against me!

XV

**I**T is to-day and now I say "Yesterday!"  
 All morning here at my writing-table  
 I have sat very still, hardly able  
 To move for fear I disturb the way  
 The draperies fall 'round my yesterday!  
 Beautiful memory-draperies that fold  
 Like a silken — molten — cloth of gold!  
 My breast seems to rhyme to their subtle sway,  
 My heart to listen their liquid murmur.  
 There are letters to write, books to review  
 My table is piled with potent hints  
 For a week's work. Yet I am afraid to stir  
 Lest you speak and I do not hear you —  
 Lest I miss any glints of those rose-gold tints!

# XVI

**L**AST night, as the amethyst mist fringed day's space,  
 I walked alone down a country road,  
 So tranquil I did not feel the load  
 Of our mutual woe in its usual place.  
 Somehow, the evening's madonna face  
 Had smiled on my grief's heart unaware  
 And left its lavender memory there.  
 As I walked,—sweet my Lord, gi' me your grace!—  
 I saw a broad field of red clover.  
 Then, sudden, a man's face stood in the night—  
 No, the man himself,—I could hear him breathe!—  
 A man years ago my—my lover.  
 I looked into his eyes . . . into the bright  
 Clear deeps—down, down to the white truth beneath!



XVII

**T**ELL you this, not to rouse jealous spleen,—  
 I detest such low, mincing subterfuge,  
 Folly simple, vacuous, huge!—  
 But because I would have no truth between  
 You and me not threshed to wheat. I mean  
 You must know straight that this love we bear  
 Was not smirched by that wakened moment there.  
 There was no sweep of delight; no sheen  
 Of regret glamour'd—only wide surprise.  
 Out of it, what? This. If, from future twilight  
 Your face leap to surprise me, I pray  
 I may look at you with as palm-clean eyes  
 As I looked into his face last night—  
 No fear, no remorse. Is not that victory?—say!

# XVIII

“**L**OST, somewhere between sunrise and sunset,  
 One golden hour” — you know the old rhyme  
 Held over our heads in the far child-time  
 When we would dawdle and dream and forget?  
 Though grief-grown to full stature now, I yet  
 Dawdle and dream much as I used to do,  
 And lose half to-day living yesterday through!  
 But of all losses my conscience has met —  
 Or will meet, I trust — is this one here now,  
 Looming stark and drear as I bow my head:  
 Lost: One whole, long, fair, blue, shining June day.  
 At its violet velvet edge I bow  
 And sob my heart out over my dead,  
 For I have been angry with you, dear, all day.

XIX

**W**AS it anger, I wonder, that thick  
Heavy dullness that clogged my heart,  
And did not even pale or start  
When the thoughts of you throbbed dry and quick,  
Wood beating on wood, empty stick on stick  
Piling high and higher, a mean tenement  
Of vacant rooms, where my spirit lent  
A fearful presence, terror-haunted, sick  
Of self, yet too dull to seek fresh air,  
Too clumsy to rise and walk into the light,  
Too suffering to hope or to dread?  
Gaunt shapes stole up and down the stair  
And voices whispered the live-long night,  
Saying over and over the thing you said.

## XX

**B**UT this morning I am well; pulse clear  
As a silver chime; my spirit high  
And steady and bold. If God were by  
It would not fail the comparison's sheer  
White light, for the good physician was here;  
Most tender is he, with his grave, sad eyes,  
Where the love the world calls "Christ" low lies.  
The physician Forgiveness healed me, dear,  
In the dreadful night, as I lay so ill.  
And now I know that as long as I live  
I must love you, my king, with an added pain —  
The god-pain of forgiveness' infinite thrill.  
So well I love you now, I would give  
All the loss and the pain and illness again.

## XXI

**L**AST night I dreamed of you, Dear Heart,—  
Just think, for the very, very first time  
Since our love's resonance struck rhyme!  
I did not cry out nor stare nor start  
When I saw you come as if a part  
Of the pregnant over-calm that steals  
Our fretted senses and wholes and heals.  
I've met you at last on the quaint dream mart!  
You said to me,—never were words so fair!  
How could you?—"Dear, our love has a way!"  
Your smile was so high that to die at your feet  
Had been easy—killed by the triumph there!  
Then—just blank day. My heart has turned gray  
With anxiety. Oh, tell me the way, Sweet!


## XXII

Ⓐ H yes, I knew you would see the best so.  
Your letter is wholly noble — yourself,  
And now lies deep in my breast, my sole wealth.  
So it is sealed and stamped, our great No,  
To lie in state as the years come and go.  
We deny love, but when death closes in,  
What now is sacrifice, Life will call sin.  
I know it. We break to the world's low  
Adjustment of things, mixed and absurd,  
Which we all laugh at, but can not correct.  
We break, not being the sort that bend,  
And break in silence, with look, not word —  
Unless in that written No one detect  
A sound that will thunder on till the end.

XXIII

**W**E are quite ready, my soul and I,  
For his coming — his coming the last.  
We know no future, we acknowledge no past,  
Just now we are, my soul and I —  
All else is tinsel, all else is lie.  
We have brushed and braided our hair,  
Enwound it with ribbons and seed-pearls fair;  
We have put on the sweet garments that sigh  
For the garish day from the chest's rose-gloom;  
We have put on our arms the jewels that thrill  
To the light like the eye of the seer.  
We have cleaned and straightened and aired the room,  
And now we wait, my soul and I, so still  
When his step rings clear we are sure to hear.

XXIV

 UR garments are folded in the rose-gloom.  
The pearls that we wore in our hair last night  
Dream of the sea, locked safe and tight;  
To dream alway, that is the pearl's high doom,  
Of the purple deeps and the sounding boom!  
I think that my heart has not beat to-day,  
Only pumped, a red organ of clay,  
Yet it sounds, distinct, in this empty room.  
In the darkness that dreadful dove's mild plaint  
Beats like a muffled blow. Does n't she know  
Yet the grief that sits tired — dead — awhile?  
She's but "half-taught in anguish"; no taint  
Of relief stains my grief. His eyes, grave, low,  
Steady — I am so glad he did not smile!



## XXV

**I** HEARD on the street to-day your name.  
What the men were saying I do not know;  
Erect, I walked straight past them, and so  
Down the street. But your name, a crimson flame,  
Flared around me and I joyed without blame.  
My spirit leaped to meet its fire,  
Just as it used, O Soul's Desire,  
As I walked in the flame and the pride of your name!  
It purged my rebel spirit God-clean;  
It said the things your silence has kept;  
It wrapped me close — the same . . . the same!  
It warmed the cold of the years between;  
It kissed all the tears my heart has wept —  
As a queen to her bridal I walked in your name!



# The Queen's Crown






## I

**I**T was dead, I thought, my grief for her,  
And I mourned my two graves side by side;  
My sister was dead and my grief had died—  
To each grave I brought roses and myrrh.  
Which grave was dearer,—the grave of her  
I had loved or the grave of that grief  
Which had brought to my aching loss relief,  
I could not tell. To each I brought myrrh  
And spices and tears; by each I knelt  
And looked long into the starry spaces.  
But last night my grief, like Aaron's rod,  
Budded and bloomed; again I felt  
That low, thick moan in the healed places.  
"There is no death." I thank you, dear God.

THIS flimsy, blatant world is no place  
 For a solemn great grief to live in :  
 It is not that it is crowded with sin,—  
 Sin?—why, “all the sin wherewith the face  
 Of man is blacken’d” yields to the grace  
 Of a pure white grief ; stands to one side,  
 Head bared, forgets it has cheated and lied  
 For the gracious moment of grief’s passing space.  
 It is not the world’s strong passions that kill  
 The nobler selves we would live up to,  
 But its petty demands, its vacant sighs  
 For the vague, vapid, vagrant gauds that still  
 Environ us close, though we wake to rue.  
 Whiteness can not live with these and grief dies.

ECEMBER the Third—your wedding day.  
 Do you mind how the Kansas sunshine  
 Caressed the world that day, Sister of mine?  
 How it smiled and beckoned? Why, it lay  
 Like a benison—it rainbowed your way!  
 The doors stood open, the grass was still green  
 Under the maple leaves, a silver-gray sheen  
 Embridaled the prairies that December's May!  
 Your brilliant beauty was sheathed. Was it awe  
 You felt at the slow words the grave man spoke?  
 And your eyes,—oh, your eyes!—their light seemed drowned  
 In some far sea you dreamed rather than saw;  
 The perfume of your look was a sweet jar broke  
 At the feet of some Christ but newly found.

**I**HAVE looked at your picture so long  
The world seems at absolute pause ;  
Suspended now are the primal laws —  
All things that twist and twirl and throng,  
The myriad thrill and lilt and song  
Are at balance. Oh, lean from your heaven,  
Your beautiful, beautiful heaven ! —  
Pity can not lead an angel wrong ! —  
Lean down and put your hand on my eyes !  
I would, sweet girl, if I were up there,  
And you down here in this pulseless room, —  
I would, though seven times seven skies  
Of crystal sapphire ensphered me there, —  
I would ask God for you to let your tears come.



## V

**W**HEN you went away, when you left the earth  
As a gilt toy outgrown; when you turned  
To higher uses, as one who has learned  
The lessons a dear book holds, and knows their worth  
Lies now in forgetting — a joyant birth  
From sheer knowledge that clogs and veils and holds  
To power which straightens, frees and unfolds, —  
When you went away from the gay green mirth,  
Where did you go, Dear, — ah, whisper me, where?  
I look at the stars, the clouds, the brow  
Of the mountains, the waves of the river,  
All things that are high and glistening and rare,  
And the sole question comes, "Where is she now?"  
Will the question beat in my mind forever?

VI

AND if it be so that the thing we are  
 Began before earth and will last beyond,—  
 A hope the hopeless have found void and fond!—  
 If it be so that from star to star  
 We pass in cycles of life fixed and far,  
 Using these things that glimmer and shine  
 As media to grow through, O life of mine,  
 We shall meet her again, as star kisses star!  
 Let the question beat in my mind till flesh  
 Be so worn that the life leaps through,  
 And, questing wide, pulse brave in other veins,  
 Growing beyond and beyond mere rose-mesh,  
 Until, somewhere in the star-strewn blue,  
 We flash together, sublimed past flesh-gains!

## VII

**O** gifts, Dear Heart, this Christmas tide  
 Can our desolate hands bring to you—  
 Only tears and longing, lilies and love and rue;  
 No lingering over fair things to decide  
 Which will best become your beauty's high pride;  
 No fearful choice, to be half regretted  
 The moment after, to be held and petted  
 In secret till the day's glad gates are wide;  
 No gifts, Dear Heart, with love select,  
 Can reach you where you are; only our thought  
 And longing, sorrow and pansies and rue;  
 Within and without the Christ-day is decked,  
 But to us its joy is sorrow enwrought.  
 It is Christmas, yes,—Christmas without you.

VIII

I AM thinking of that clean April day —  
“Clean,” I call it; there was not a speck,  
Not a flaw, not a mote, not a fleck  
One could hide behind to get away  
From something one feared — just plain honest day,  
Direct, piercing, calm, its gold doors flung wide,  
A day made to cope with your noble pride;  
The angels did not deny you your way,  
Your bright-eyed courage when death came near.  
Some die when enshrouding night takes death's part;  
Some, amid shock, glare, uproar, too soon  
To know fear; some, sense dead, do not hear  
Death's step. You, with a courage that breaks my heart,  
You died conscious, silent, in the candid noon.

## IX

O say what your last silence seems to me,  
I would give—I would give all I hope in life.  
Could I find words that would cut, like a knife,  
Meanings clean and whole; words one can see  
To the depths of like diamonds, nor be  
Cheated in the looking by beauty's form;  
Words bleak, benign, sharp, cold yet crimson warm—  
Oh, could I tell you how it seems to me,  
That courage of yours, I could breathe death too,  
When I'd told you, with the slow-spending sigh  
Of one who has lived to do all that he dreamed!  
It was the kingliest thing . . . my heart breaks through  
The coarse words; colorless, barren they lie,  
Shattered and chill—I have failed all I dreamed.

T O-DAY in my blood stirred the vibrant hum  
 Of new spring. So I lifted my head and rose  
 And walked through streets where traffic goes;  
 Saw it all afresh as one just come  
 From some far place, eyes washed and dumb;  
 The very same world we knew together,—  
 Brilliant, arrogant, empty, clever,  
 Humanity's paltry, tremendous sum!  
 And I found myself almost smiling, free,  
 With the old light, shrugging disdain,  
 When in a stab the thought cut keen,  
 "She will never see it again with me!"  
 One world for you and one for me . . . and your ~  
 Of an infinitude of worlds between!

# XI

S one who wakens from slumber so deep  
 That character is wiped out, as a sponge  
 Annuls all that is, — a sudden lunge  
 From the vast blank into the swirling sweep  
 Of things, — stands confused, blinded, bruised with sleep,  
 So I stood when the words had burned in  
 That you were dead. No, not burned in;  
 Those words lay wide in the outer deep  
 Where no moan stirred, nor tears nor light.  
 You had died at noon, the paper said;  
 "Peacefully" — that superb word was there.  
 Not a minute before I had laughed, bright,  
 At the boy's pencil. Dead . . . the paper said,  
 And my world fell down at my feet — on the stair.

AND then, when the pitiless morning came,  
To pick up my scattered world from the stair —  
Take up the uses of life again, where  
I had dropped them; to begin with the same  
Worn routine the new-opening day — The same?  
The same? What lies words are! I had power  
To do the needful, — woman's sad dower! —  
Power to hold grief in check, lest it maim  
Or delay that long journey's slow haste;  
Sympathy reached me in look and in word,  
Quiet hands finished some poor act half done,  
Miles slipped away with the piteous waste  
Of my heart's dull patience . . . then I heard  
"Here she is!" and my white goal was won.



### XIII

THE Florida air of that April night  
As it came through the open windows, sweet  
From the magnolia blossoms, to meet  
And mix with the sweetness of roses bright  
And lilies in the darkened parlor's light,  
Where white silence rested all about her  
Who was the heart of sweetness' low stir —  
Oh, the Florida air of that April night!  
It lifted the curtains a breathing space,  
Then dropped them, slow, to their own folds' right;  
It touched the dark hair that lay on her brow,  
Crowning the peace and the state of her face —  
The Florida air of that April night . . .  
I breathe it here now on my hands and brow.

#### XIV

**H**URRYING feet, voices strident and loud;  
The lifting haze of an October day —  
A dawning, rather, gold barring the gray;  
Two faces, alone, of the gathering crowd,  
A baby face and a mother face bowed  
Above it, — faces framed in the rich brown  
Of the car window, before the big town  
Was astir, — these, these alone, of the crowd!  
In the baby's fresh-wakened eyes, a maze  
Of growing wonder; her face illumed with pain —  
The leaving those she loved with a love past  
Any love I have known . . . The lifting haze  
A shadow of moan 'neath the gold's glad gain . . .  
The last time I saw her — save that white time — the last.

XV

“**O**VER them over with beautiful flowers” —  
 The muffled music's voice mourns low,  
 With laden hands the people go,  
 Filling radiant May's last hours  
 With fragrance born of April showers.  
 Our soldiers' graves are readily found;  
 Side by side in the consecrate ground  
 The dead who have meeded these perfumed hours.  
 But I seek a cruel word I spoke,  
 Which died, oh! so long ago — if it be  
 That words die. I am seeking that grave,  
 The grave of the cruel word which broke  
 Your bright face for a minute's length. Oh, see,  
 I have lilies . . . and rue — but I find not the grave!

# XVI

**H**E will not have to bear my death — that night  
 The thought came, a winged thing, to the place  
 Where lay the hands you had used, the face  
 You had smiled through. The thought came flashing right  
 Out of the still fastness where Love keeps light  
 Winged and spurred, that it may reach earth quick  
 And succor the poor who are not death-sick  
 But fall headlong. It saved me in the sight  
 Of your sealed eyes, that help kindly Love sent.  
 And if it shocked your new angelhood  
 Or hurt the heart that I know beats high  
 In its center, to see that I spent  
 That supreme hour receiving a good —  
 You will pardon, remembering I could not die.

## XVII

**W**E sat there an hour talking of you,  
 Agnes and I, on a bench in Lincoln Park,  
 Indulging in a mild Saturday lark.  
 We looked at the lake spreading its gleaming blue  
 To our very feet, then — we talked of you.  
 Someway our thoughts sobered and lengthened there,  
 Dropped all dross, sought for the far chaste and fair, —  
 Felt the dim sense of sadness that runs through  
 All beauty like a voice wan with a woe  
 Long since past. Our eyes on the distant line  
 Where the silver blue met the sapphire blue,  
 Speaking as those who are conscious words go  
 Only on the surface of thoughts' deep mine,  
 We talked, long and tenderly, Sister, of you.

# XVIII

THE long years to come might have divided  
 Our lives, I know, as no mere crude Death will;  
 To spend one's whole self in the Now, to fill  
 Life's uses as a brimming cup, guided  
 By its needs, demanding, many-sided,  
 Is all of our human story; the Now,  
 The total the noblest heart can allow,  
 Might have slowly, securely divided  
 Even us. For all of our loving, our care,  
 It might have come . . . Two women, eager to save  
 The old-home past — girlhood's dim days at start —  
 As some beloved dead, Christ-called to share  
 New earth-life, shrinks and turns back to the grave —  
 We are spared that resurrection, O Heart!

## XIX

**W**HERE are the two happy girls, tell me,  
Who used to drive in the pert dog-cart?  
Yes, happy girls,—you arch your brows, my heart,  
Surprised to hear tell what you used to be!—  
In that Kansas town, blithe, generous, free,  
Resting at ease in our father's name,  
Carelessly safe in his broad, clean fame,—  
“Those Woodman girls, you know!”—you and me!  
How you'd “speed” Billy around the track,—  
Dear little horse, he thought it was fun!—  
Urging and shouting and waving the whip!  
And how we'd follow the calliope back  
To “the big tent” . . . You, Dear, still a happy one,  
I, watching, wary to give earth's yoke the slip!

## XX

AND when I was putting away your things,  
The poor little things you had loved, used, worn,—  
Things of earth-use, by memory borne  
Quite above themselves, on opaline wings  
Flashing far wide the new light that grief brings,—  
I found your silver spur . . . your silver spur  
And your riding-whip, bits of days that were  
Fresh, brave, upspringing as the fairy rings!  
And Stella was there, in that green flannel sacque  
You traded me for a red opera waist;  
Stella, with only one arm and no hair,  
A dismal hole in her head—my tears flowed back  
From their frozen arrest, warm, sweet to the taste—  
The healing of tears came first to me there.



## XXI

**H**OW the rain beats against the window-pane!  
All this June day the throbbing heat had hung  
Like a shimmering pall; no bird has sung,  
Only brooded over and over again  
His little bird woes. Now it comes, amain,  
In angry rush, with loud insult hurling  
Its power broadcast, mocking, unfurling  
Slanting sheets of steel—oh, the wind and the rain!  
They tell me that when it used to rain so,—  
And in Florida the rain falls like lead,—  
You would shrink and sob, in remembering pain,  
Thinking of our father's grave, where winds blow  
Over purple prairies. You felt the dead  
Must feel the blows—oh, the rain . . . God, the rain!

**I**T 'S a dead sparrow, see, Dear, that I found  
On the pavement; a tiny, crushed thing,  
Its joyous life stilled in throat and wing—  
Too sad a bit to encumber the ground,  
So it lies in state on a swelling mound  
Of pale garden roses. I am thinking,—  
The tiniest death sends my thoughts sinking  
Below what seems,—when it fell to the ground  
No loving God marked its pain and fall;  
Its flutter of life collided—the awe  
Of majestic words in this little death's dark!—  
With the sequence of things, that is all;  
God is only our passion-name for Law,  
Law immutable, uncaring, blind, stark!

XXIII

**L**OST God, you see, in my doubt's long dark,  
And found only Law and Law knows no love;  
It does not watch in vast pity above  
Our little earth whirling in space, nor mark  
The fall of the sparrow, the rise of the lark!  
It knows no Father-care, no Christ-tears,  
It knows nor passion nor light nor years,  
Inexorable, on-going, deaf, stark!  
To have told you this, of my pain and loss,  
Would have broken us both where we stood;  
And if you had stayed here I must have told,  
Denied even while I bent under that cross!  
To think that you know it now, straight and good,  
That comfort has domed my sorrow with gold.

## XXIV



O you know what day it is down here,  
O dear Madonna of the Tender Eyes,  
Or don't they know of birthdays in the skies?  
It's a precious, precious day, but no cheer  
Meets its worth in my heart; with faint, far fear  
I wrap pretty gifts about and about,  
Winding verses and ribbons in and out,  
For it is your baby's birthday — down here.  
Seven years old to-day, our gallant boy,  
With the speech, the eyes, the heart, all true . . .  
Then why the far fear? That no mother sight  
Can cull, for him, the world's good from alloy.  
His life must blossom and fruit without you —  
That 's the spreading blot in this day's large bright.

## XXV

OUT in the dark the wild wind is crying . . .  
The wind 's in the cottonwoods, and my heart  
Is trembling like a little bird astart  
With its first passion. I — I am trying  
To crush it down, to forget the dying  
Dim cadence, but the waves of that river —  
The river we knew — mingled forever,  
Rising and falling with that wind's crying!  
Oh, the waves of that river! Oh, days  
That are dead but keep not their tombs!  
Oh those violets of the Lakeside woods!  
The lights — the lights of that river! The Mays  
We played beneath its willows' soft plumes!  
The wind to-night is in the cottonwoods!

## XXVI

THE ink dries on my pen. The words are wrought  
For better, for worse. The end that must close  
With incomplete silence our half-dumb woes,  
I acknowledge. I have no will nor thought  
To make a luxury of grief. I caught  
At the first some glimpse of this woe. "The wheel  
Is come full circle." Broken, bruised, I seal  
In your name all the suffering has taught.  
I seal silence henceforth, the high gift meet,  
For on my rhyme-grief I must not lean —  
That would degrade. I lay these poor words down  
At your feet — your beautiful feet! —  
Nor raise my eyes — who would grieve the queen?  
Not I, who am not worthy to touch her crown.







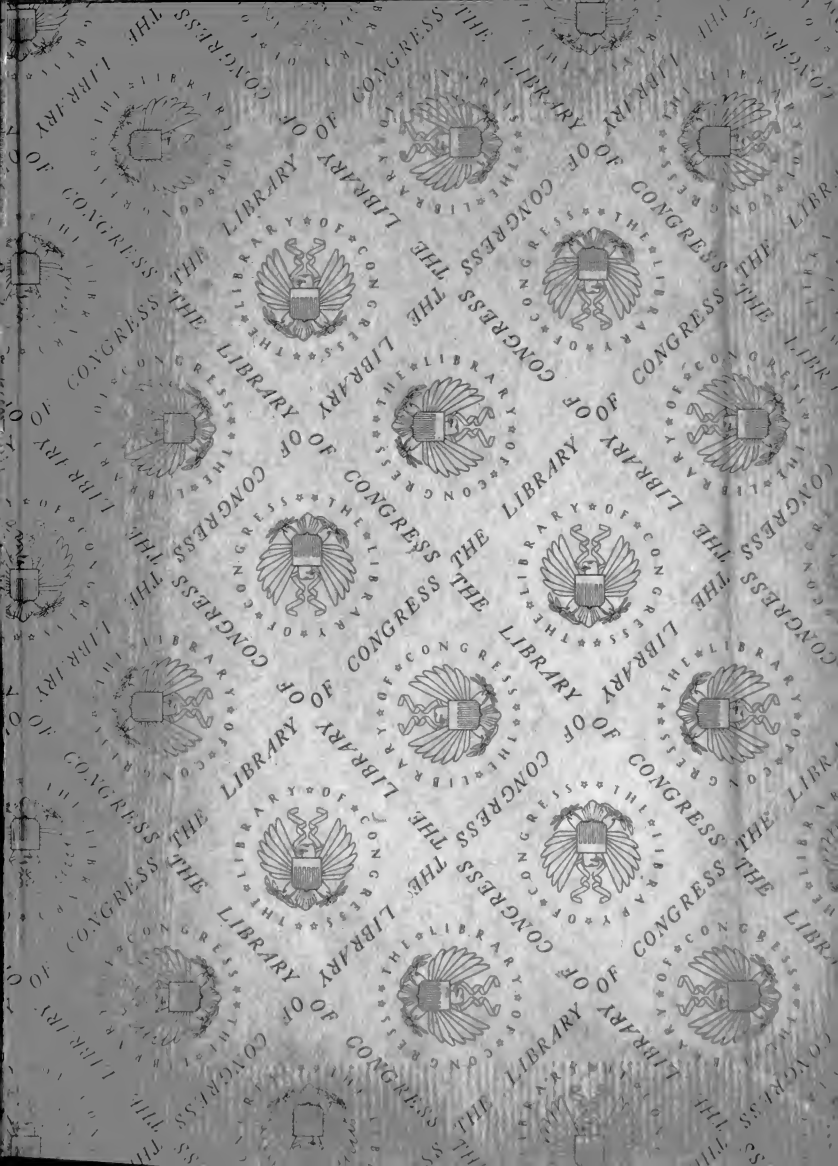


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